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THE
HONOUR OF MARRIAGE
OPPOSED TO
ALL IMPURITIES:
AN
ESSAY.

[*Price Six-pence.*]



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ALL IMPURITIES:

AN

ESSAY.

BY THE LATE MR SANDEMAN,

Author of Letters on THERON and ASPASIO.

*Marriage is honourable in all, and the Bed undefiled: but
Whoremongers and Adulterers God will judge. Heb. xiii. 4.
Wherewith shall a young Man cleanse his Way? by taking
Heed thereto, according to thy Word. Psalm cxix. 9.*

EDINBURGH:

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INTRODUCTION.

EVERY reader of the ensuing pages, who pays any degree of attention to the sentiments contained in them, and is tolerably acquainted with the subject in general, will be ready to acknowledge, that it is treated in a manner quite new, if not very striking.

This acknowledgment would have been still more readily excited, had the author himself lived to correct the Essay, and complete it for the press.

But, however new and striking the manner in which the subject is treated, it cannot be expected, that this Essay should gain any thing like a general approbation, because it does most strongly condemn, the too-prevailing course of this world, with respect to marriage: and this is sufficient to expose it to general disregard, if not universal contempt.

Indeed, the dictates of nature, and the voice of conscience, must be on the side of the decent and honourable practice here recommended: but false motives of interest, oft times banish the principles of affection and honour, which, if cherished, attend the dictates of nature, and, leaving only the unruly impetus behind, hurry the young man into that deep ditch, the mercenary embraces of the diseased harlot, and bring on the ruin both of his constitution and fortune; and thus, too late, he is
convinced

convinced, that the motives which his parents taught him, and which led him to postpone honourable marriage, are, even in point of prudence, delusive and vain.

If any are led to reject, with proper indignation, those base motives by which marriage is so generally postponed, because they would keep good consciences, by avoiding every impurity condemned in God's word, it must be through the influence of that word, which comes wholly from God: and it was for the encouragement of such, that this Essay was at first written.

If they attend to the subject, and are incited to cleanse their way, by taking heed thereto according to God's word, though all others, as the natural effect of having their own deeds reprov'd, should pour contempt upon this Essay, and still cleave to their own contaminated way, yet the great end and design of the author in writing, and of the editor in publishing this little piece will be effectually answered.

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HONOUR OF MARRIAGE

OPPOSED

TO ALL IMPURITIES.

THE dignity of man above the brute creation appears in a striking point of view, from the minute attention of the Deity to all the concerns of humanity; and from the care which he hath taken, to support and honour the genuine claims, relations, and propensities of nature, his own workmanship, in opposition to every irregular desire, arising from the corruption of nature, which, with great propriety and consistency, he hath stamped as dishonourable, and accompanied with a sense, yea, very often, with visible effects of his displeasure.

The conscience, or common sense of mankind, notwithstanding all their depravity, supports this general observation; we count nothing dishonourable, base, or ridiculous, that properly belongs to nature. Attempts to ridicule nature, may indeed prove successful, in various instances, to promote the mirth of fools; but they meet with contempt or resentment from considerate men.

Yea, so respectable is nature, that attempts of this kind scarcely succeed even among fools, unless the subject is some way disguised, or accompanied with improper circumstances; even as a wise man may seem ridiculous when insulted by

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scorners,

scorners, or when compelled to appear in public with a fool's cap.

But I have the less need to enlarge upon this, as the comeliness of nature, the deformity of every deviation from it, and the natural consequences which Providence so generally makes use of, as sanctions to the laws of nature, have been copiously displayed by many of the most ingenious modern writers; nor need I enlarge to the friends of written revelation, in shewing that the clear and explicit voice of God expressed there, always strongly supports his more silent language suggested by nature, or the mutual relations or dependencies of his works.

My purpose at present is, to remind the friends of revelation, of the particular care which the Deity hath taken, to superintend, and regulate nature by his word, in one of the capital concerns of mankind, considered either as individuals, or as connected in society; I mean, the mutual propensity between the sexes.

This we may well call a capital concern of human life, when we reflect that hence arise the nearest, and most endearing connections; hence arises the relation of husband and wife, hence the relation of parents and children, brothers and sisters, and many others. In a word, we may call it the hinge of all kindred, or the capital link of the chain, that binds society together; and the history of mankind clearly shews, that the most important revolutions of states and kingdoms, have turned upon this hinge.

This propensity is founded in the immediate workmanship of God, who originally formed mankind male and female, and from the marriage of one man with one woman, hath produced all the tribes who inhabit the earth; and the adequate proportion of males and females still observed in

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the world, is pertinently urged by our most distinguished writers, in opposition to the atheist, as one of the most convincing arguments of a designing Providence.

Though the various tribes of inferior animals were likewise formed male and female, yet from all we can observe, it doth not appear that any thing further was hereby intended by Providence, than the continuance of each after their kind. For among them, the mutual propensity of the sexes seems in general to be only casual; it appears at the proper seasons to subserve that end, and ceaseth when that end is accomplished: nor does it appear necessary that it should be more permanent; for, with them, instinct in a great measure supplies the place of education, and they are soon able to shift for themselves. The same instinct likewise, in the most considerable of the various kinds, leads both old and young, to unite together in flocks and swarms, without any sense of the tie of parentage or kindred; a tie which is to them the less necessary, as they are but little molested by those various passions which so often counteract nature in mankind.

Among mankind, on the other hand, the young are for years weak and defenceless, unskilled, and unable to shift for themselves, so require all that time to be reared, at the great expence of the continual care and industry of the parents. This long-continued care, promotes two wise ends of Providence; it serves to strengthen the natural affection of the parents, and make it lasting as their lives; and it serves to promote in the minds of the children, a durable sense of dependance, gratitude, and respect to their parents, while it lays, at the same time, a strong foundation for mutual friendship among themselves.

That this chain of affection might be preserved,

and parents encouraged to undergo the long-continued cares and fatigues which attend the rearing a numerous family, it was necessary that the first link of that chain on which the rest depended, should be strong and durable; accordingly, the Author of nature hath provided, that, in the human species, the propensity of the sexes should be more strong and constant than in other animals: not only so;—he hath superadded to the common propensity of nature, and strongly blended with it, a superior sentiment of delicacy and honour, of tender affection, and endearing love, which other animals seem to be ignorant of; a sentiment that partakes indeed much of the distinguishing character of individuals, but which in those of the most amiable character, appears always in the greatest perfection; and the general fond taste for real histories, or works of imagination, describing either the simplicity, or the refinements of that sentiment, is a sufficient, yea a striking proof, that it has a real, a universal foundation in human nature.

But this is not all. The Author of nature hath seen meet to strengthen this sentiment, and guard it against corruption, by dignifying it with manifest tokens of honour from himself; while he strongly denounces his displeasure against the corruption of it. What honour do we see put upon human nature in general, and upon the conjugal tie in particular, in God himself condescending to be the conductor of the first bride to her husband!

Though man hath, by disobedience, forfeited the friendship of his Maker; yet as God intends to shew mercy to many, he for their sakes, extends his long-suffering to all; and gives manifest proofs that he nearly interests himself in the concerns of the human race. And though the corruption of nature hath perhaps no where appear-

ed more glaring, than in the abuse of the natural propensity of the sexes; yet he still continues to put honour on the conjugal tie, which he himself at first introduced. Four thousand years after the fall the inspired scriptures declare afresh, "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled; but whoremongers and adulterers, God will judge." And when Immanuel, *God with us*, was found in fashion as a man, he honoured a marriage in Galilee with his presence.

Among the various images, which the scriptures borrow from natural relations, and the corresponding affections, to illustrate the concern of God about his people, an especial regard we find is had to the conjugal relation, which is more frequently and copiously insisted on than any other. Thus God is represented as a husband, related to his church by a marriage-covenant, that binds her to be wholly for him, and not for another; and which at the same time gives her the strongest security for the constancy of his love: and thus, as the love of an affectionate husband can bear no rivalry, but naturally kindles into burning jealousy against every stranger, who would divide with him the love of his spouse, or by any means corrupt the simplicity of her affection; so God commends the purity, the fervency, and sincerity of his love to his church, by many awful expressions of his jealousy, which is often described as burning like fire. Yea *jealous*, is expressly adopted as one of the names of God, and a name by which he delights often to be distinguished; as it is said, Ex. xxxiv. 14. "Thou shalt worship no other God; for Jehovah, whose name is Jealous, is a Jealous God."

This serves to convey to us a most respectable, yea, we may add a most amiable illustration of the nature of God's wrath. For when we consider,

der, as the scripture would have us, the whole character of God as fitly summed up in Love; what else is his wrath but the resentment of jealous love, repelling and banishing far away every thing of a malignant nature, every thing unamiable, or in a word, every thing that would mar the mutual intercourse of the purest joy of the most fervent love; even as the sun shining in his strength, drives far away the opposite darkness?

We are apt to run into a mistake about the jealousy, or wrath of God, as if it conveyed some notion of perturbation, and consequently of imperfection in the Deity; whereas in truth, the perturbation takes place only in the breasts of his malignant adversaries. We are apt, I say, to run into this mistake, because we find that the resentment of injured love cannot take place in the breast of a man, without marring for a season his joy, so interrupting his enjoyment of love. But when we think of the Deity, we must conceive *Him* as blessed for ever, without interruption of happiness.—Constantly and invariably opposite to all evil, even as he is infinitely and invariably good in himself, so that without the least abatement of his boundless happiness, he can at once smile on his friends and frown on his foes. This is some way represented to us by his escorting his chosen people Israel in the cloudy pillar, which, while it gave joyful light to them, with dreadful darkness frowned upon their enemies.

Jealousy, we find, was a distinguishing peculiarity in the character of the God of Israel; for the gods of the Gentiles were by no means jealous gods. They easily admitted others to rank with them in the same temple, and share in the same honours; and as they never shewed any resentment against such partnership, their worshippers saw no reason to object it. So the Romans, who ho-

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noured the gods of all the nations whom they conquered, had their Pantheon, a temple dedicated to the honour of all the gods; and long before that, the Philistines were complaisant enough to give the ensigns of the God of Israel a place beside their god in his temple: but the breach that was made on Dagon, and the sudden plague, destroying multitudes of his worshippers, gave striking proofs that the God of Israel was *the Jealous God*, who shared not his honours with any other.

As the true God was thus distinguished by his jealousy, so we find him shewing great respect in his law, to the jealousy of a man over his wife, by the institution of the bitter water that caused the curse, which could give evidence of her guilt or innocence, only by means of a constant, extraordinary, or miraculous providence; and this is the only constant miracle that we find supporting the law in private causes.

The extraordinary providence exercised over the nation of Israel in general, was a continued display of the jealousy of God. He loved that nation, it is said, beyond all other nations; not as better than any of them, but on account of the fleshly relation which they bore to the Saviour of the world, who was to spring from them: they, on the other hand, are represented by their untoward and adulterous behaviour, as many times vexing his spirit, and provoking him to chastise them like an enemy. Yet, after he had made use of any of the neighbouring nations to chastise them, he soon turned his displeasure against those nations, to check their vaunting, and punish their malice, shewing mercy at the same time to his people, and relieving them oftentimes when at their wits end: and thus his long-suffering and mercy, in the midst of repeated provocations, was continued towards them, till they had served the purpose for which they

they became a nation, by giving birth to the Saviour, "The Word made flesh." When their fleshly relation to him being dissolved by their putting him to death, and the adulterous perfidy of their hearts proved to be incorrigible, by their continued opposition to him and his apostles; God utterly rejected them, saying, "They continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not."—So they fell a prey to the sword of the Romans.

From what has been said, it appears, that the marriage-covenant between God and that nation, never took effect so as to bring them to the exalted happiness proposed by it in these words, "If ye walk in my statutes, I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people." But when the national happiness had come to its greatest height in the days of Solomon, and when the kingdom of Judah was fast filling up the measure of their iniquity, following the footsteps of the apostate house of Israel, and all the gracious intentions intimated in that covenant seemingly on the point of being defeated; then we find the Spirit of God, by the mouth of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and other prophets of that period, breaking forth into the boldest and most assured promises, of the most exalted happiness to take place, by a most intimate union of the Deity with his church redeemed out of all nations, and to be related to him by a new and eternal marriage-covenant, that could never be made void by any guilt or deficiency on their part.

The nation of Israel was seldom at any time, from first to last, without sensible tokens that God was not well pleased with their conduct; and any short intervals which they enjoyed of respite and success, were only faint shadows, of the superior happiness contained in the promise of better things.

to come by the Messiah. But in the days of the prophets now mentioned, when the glory of the kingdom of Judah and Israel was on the decline, and many prophecies were uttered, threatening in the most assured manner the utter extinction of that glory; then, under various images, particularly by images borrowed from the conjugal relation, were displayed the strongest assurances, and most lively illustrations of the superior happiness contained in that promise. Hitherto no happiness had been enjoyed but what was obscured, more or less, with the frown of jealousy; now the enjoyment of love in perfection, began to be exhibited in the most endearing light, by bolder and more lively promises. Take for a sample the following from the numerous passages to this effect contained in the prophets. Isa. lxii. 3, 5. "Thou shalt be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God; thou shalt no more be termed forsaken, neither shall thy land any more be termed desolate: but thou shalt be called Hephzibah, and thy land Beulah; for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married; for as a young man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee; and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee." Jer. xxxiii. 8—11. "I will pardon all their iniquities—and it shall be to me a name of joy, a praise, and an honour before all the nations of the earth, who shall hear all the good that I do unto them, and they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness, and for all the prosperity, that I procure unto them. Thus saith the Lord, again there shall be heard in this place, the voice of joy, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the voice of them who shall say, Praise the Lord of hosts, for the
" Lord

"Lord is good, for his mercy endureth for ever." Hof. ii. 19, 20. "And I will betrothe thee unto me for ever, yea, I will betrothe thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in loving kindness, and in mercies; I will even betrothe thee unto me in faithfulness, and thou shalt know the Lord." And many others might be cited to the same purpose.

In the New Testament again, where we see the apostles boldly applying to Christ every divine perfection, and every peculiar title of honour by which the prophets had distinguished the true God from all idols and creatures; we find due care is taken to distinguish him as the one husband, to whom the church is espoused, so as to be chargeable with idolatry, or spiritual adultery, in taking any other in his stead; so says Paul to the church of Corinth (2 Cor. xi. 2, 3.) "I am jealous over you with the jealousy of God, for I have espoused you to one husband, to present you a chaste virgin to Christ; but I fear, lest by any means as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from simplicity, (or singleness) towards Christ." And the perfection of the happiness of the church is described thus, Rev. xix. 7, 8, 9. "Let us be glad and exult, and give honour to Him; for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted, that she should be arrayed in fine linen clean and white; for the fine linen is the righteousness of the saints. And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they who are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb: and he saith unto me, these are the true sayings of God."

Now, to come more particularly to the subject it is time to observe, that Paul, reminding the Ephesians of the mutual love between Christ and

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his church, sets that love before Christian husbands and their wives as a pattern, as well as a forcible argument to bind their consciences to conjugal affection.

Young people, when first marriageable, are not fondly to presume, that the common propensity formerly spoken of, will prove a sufficient security for conjugal affection; but a little acquaintance with the world, soon discovers the vanity of this fond presumption: and it is no small proof of the corruption of human nature, that there should be so much need for the assistance of the supernatural principles of the gospel, to support and preserve an affection which has so strong a foundation in nature. At the same time, we must admire the condescension and friendly regard of the Deity, when we reflect that this affection, when supported and regulated by the Gospel, is exalted to the rank of a Christian virtue, and an imitation of the Son of God!

The passage which I am glancing at, runs thus, Eph. v. 22,—33. “Wives be subject to your own husbands as unto the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, even as Christ is head of the church; and he is the Saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives *be* to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify it, cleansing it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives, as their own bodies: he who loveth his wife, loveth himself; for no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord

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“the church; for we are members of his body,
 “of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause
 “shall a man leave his father and his mother,
 “and shall be joined to his wife, and these
 “two shall be one flesh. This is a great my-
 “stery, but I speak concerning Christ and the
 “church. Nevertheless, let every one of you in
 “particular, so love his wife even as himself; and
 “let the wife reverence her husband.”

It is not in vain that the scripture speaks in
 such honourable terms of marriage, and brings
 such sacred and exalted motives to cultivate the
 affection that belongs to it. For as the will of
 God is, to confine the propensity of the sexes in-
 tirely within that honourable channel, so he loud-
 ly denounces his wrath against all abuse of that
 propensity, or indulgence of it any other way.
 When so confined, it serves to promote that
 noble affection of love, which imitates the Deity
 when not so confined, it tends to the greatest de-
 basement of human nature, both before God and
 man.

The law given by Christ, to direct the con-
 sciences of his disciples in regard to marriage, is
 thus expressed by his apostle, 1 Cor. vii. 2. “To
 “avoid fornications, let every man have his own
 “wife, and let every woman have her own hus-
 “band. Those acquainted with the scripture
 style will observe, that the word fornication fre-
 quently bears a more extensive sense there, than
 in our common discourse. It denotes what we
 call adultery, Matth. v. 32. and xix. 9; it de-
 notes incest, 1 Cor. v. 1.; and it is used in Jude
 ver. 7. to denote the sin of Sodom. In the text ju-
 st mentioned, the Greek expression is plural, and
 should have been accordingly so rendered by our
 translators, as they have properly done it Matth.

xv. 19. "Out of the heart, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications," &c.

Sometimes the word fornication is attended with other words, giving a comprehensive view of the evil practices which at other times are censured under that word when used alone; as Gal. v. 19. "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these—adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness." These three last expressions are likewise classed together in 2 Cor. xii. 21. and Paul seems to have every thing of that kind in his eye, when, Eph. v. 3. he warns the Ephesians against fornication, and *all uncleanness*.

But when, as in our text, the expression is found alone, and to extend its meaning, used in the plural; and that too, as respecting all the evils to be avoided by marriage; we must conceive the apostle's meaning to be no less than if he had said, to avoid *all impurities*, or every abuse of the natural propensity, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband; and that accordingly, by the Christian law, marriage is opposed to adultery, fornication, and *all uncleanness*.

What the impurities guarded against by the Christian law of marriage are, may be seen (besides the passages already mentioned) in Lev. xviii. Rom. i. 26, 27. Col. iii. 5. 1 Tim. i. 10. and 1 Cor. vi. 9.

In the last of these texts, we find classed together among those who shall not inherit the kingdom of God, adulterers, *effeminate*, abusers of themselves with mankind, thieves, &c. What our translators could mean by giving us the *effeminate*, ranked in the midst of the most heinous transgressors of the law of nature, is difficult to say. All who lead quiet lives, by cultivating the arts of peace, are deemed effeminate, by those who

are inured to the hardships of war; and civilized nations in general appear effeminate to the more barbarous tribes who know not the refinements of civilization.

To me it appears past doubt, that the Greek word *malakoi*, should in this place be rendered not *effeminate* but *self-pollutors*. I am not the first who have made this observation, and agreeably thereto, the very ancient Syriac version translates it by the same word, or a branch of the same word, that is used in expressing the sin of Onan Gen. xxxviii. 9. At any rate, the place where the word in question stands, sufficiently shews that it is intended to censure some sort of uncleanness, and when we consider it is distinguished from the uncleannesses mentioned immediately before and after, no translation, I apprehend, can appear more natural and easy than what has been already offered.

To what has been said on the occasional extent of the word fornication, we may connect likewise here the extensive view of fornication given by Paul, 1 Thess. iv. 3, 8. where he opposes it to the sanctification and honour of a Christian's body, which he calls his vessel, as elsewhere his tabernacle, "For this," says he, "is the will of God, *even* your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication, that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour, not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles who know not God. For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness. He therefore who despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath all given unto us his Holy Spirit." And lastly, to this may be added, the very extensive sense of adultery given by the great Christian Lawgiver Matth. v. 27. "Ye have heard that it was said

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"by them of old time, thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart."

What a source for conviction is here opened to all the human race! Who can look into this perfect law, and say, I am clean? or who, as to this matter, can lay one hand upon his heart, and with the other, pointing to his neighbour, say, "Stand by, I am holier than thou?" This one source of conviction, when duly attended to, is enough to darken the whole earth with despair. But how much more abundant is the cause of thanksgiving for the gracious and merciful appearance of Him, who could with propriety say, John viii. 12. "I am the light of the world; he who followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

The grace that gave him, the Holy One, to suffer for the impure, appears the richer, when we reflect on the awful testimonies of God's fiery indignation against uncleanness recorded in scripture, as certain presages of the wrath to come: so in Gen. xix. we find that God rained fire and brimstone from heaven on the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, who are said, chiefly in respect of their uncleanness, to have been wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly. And in the New Testament, Jude ver. 7. that people are said to be set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire: in like manner Moses, Lev. xviii. after giving a detail of the impurities of the Canaanites, for which such terrible destruction came upon them, concludes the account thus, ver. 27. "For all these abominations have the men of the land done, who were before you, and the land is defiled." And he warns Israel

ver. 28,—30. "That (says he) the land spued
 "you not out also, when you defile it, as it spued
 "out the nations that were before you; for who-
 "soever shall commit any of these abominations,
 "even the souls who commit them shall be cut
 "off from among their people. Therefore shall
 "you keep mine ordinance, that you commit not
 "any one of these abominable customs which
 "were committed before you, and that you
 "defile not yourselves therein; I am the Lord
 "your God." Agreeably to this, among the
 reasons given for the captivity of Jerusalem, and
 the destruction of many of the people, Jer. v. 7, 8,
 takes notice of their prevailing uncleanness: and
 Ezek. xxii. 9, 10, 11. points out the several sorts
 of it. The house of Israel, or the ten tribes,
 suffered the like judgment before Judah, for
 following the abominable customs of the nations
 who had been destroyed to give place to them,
 and of the nations who now lived round about
 them; and these last nations again suffered the
 like judgments according to the predictions of
 Jeremiah, and the other prophets of that age: all
 which manifold display of desolating and destroying
 judgment, was a pledge of the certainty of God's
 determination, Zeph. iii. 8. where he says,
 "All the earth shall be devoured with the fire of
 "my jealousy."

Here we may justly add, that the nations called
 Christian, trained up under the influence of a
 perverted gospel, have not abounded less than
 the ancient heathens in any species of uncleanness,
 even as the New Testament prophecies had fore-
 told. In scripture, this lust is pointed out as
 closely connected with pride and covetousness;
 and often as subservient to idolatry, which is
 called adultery in the spiritual sense; in Sodom,
 it was connected, Ezek. xvi. 49. with pride,
 fulness

fulness of bread, idleness, and unmerciful covetousness respecting the poor. Israel is complained of, as enticed, through fornication, to idolatry. Some of the first New Testament churches, are censured for having among them those who taught to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols; and Peter, prophesying of the corruption of Christianity, and the pernicious ways into which many would be seduced, through the art and covetousness of false teachers, takes occasion to observe, 2 Pet. ii. 9, 10. "The Lord knoweth how to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished;" immediately adding, "but chiefly those who walk after the flesh, in the lust of uncleanness, and despising government," &c.

Now the better to understand by what means uncleanness, in all its branches, has abounded as much under the profession of Christianity, as ever it did under heathenism, it will be proper to consider more particularly the Christian law of marriage, (1 Cor. vii. 2.) of which we have only as yet taken a general view.

And, 1st, That law points out the reason that should bind the conscience of a Christian in regard to marriage, and shew him whether he ought to marry or not. He must marry "to avoid fornications," or all impurities; if he can avoid these without marriage, he ought not to marry; if he does, he does not marry in the Lord, or in subjection to the Lord's authority. That this is the sense of the law, is evident from what follows, ver. 7,—9. where the apostle says, "I would that all men were even as I myself, but every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that; I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, it is good for them, if they abide even as I. But

"if they cannot contain, let them marry, for it is better to marry than to burn."

2dly, It is evident then, that it is not left entirely to a man's own option whether he shall marry or not; even as it came not of his own choice, that he is now this or that way gifted of God: the divine law respecting the gift that God hath given him, fixes his duty for him. "All men, (says Christ, Matth. xix. 11, 12.) cannot receive this saying (preferring a single life); but they to whom it is given:" then he speaks of some eunuchs who are born so, of others made so of men, and of a third sort who make themselves so for the kingdom of heaven's sake; adding this plain law, "He who is able to receive" (the aforementioned saying) let him receive it." The two former sorts, being utterly disqualified for marriage by natural defect, cannot propose to marry without offering a high insult to humanity, and the divine law. The third sort must be those, who though in some degree capable of marriage, and accordingly inclined to it, have yet no such inclination, but what may be subverted or subdued by the mind's being engaged in a serious and laudable pursuit, of which none surely can deserve the name better, than a zealous pursuit of the interests of God's kingdom; and this view of the matter appears quite agreeable to the whole strain of Paul's reasoning, 1 Cor. vii. Therefore, when we see a man professing subjection to Christ, and chusing to lead a single life, the most favourable judgment we can form of him is, that he is either a eunuch by absolute natural defect, or that it is given him of God to become so, for the kingdom of heaven's sake.

3dly, If the reason given in the Christian law, is the *only* reason that can make it warrantable for a Christian to marry; then surely *that* is the only honourable

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ourable reason that his mouth can openly avow as binding his conscience. It is proper to attend to this, because when once, by the influence of evil custom, people are induced to disavow, or be ashamed of the only honourable reason, then we may be assured of hearing the base motives of vanity, ambition, and covetousness, not only openly avowed, but also effectually operating among men, to the destruction of the natural comfort of the married state. But why should a Christian man be ashamed to own, that he marries because he cannot otherwise possess his body in sanctification and honour? or can the chaste virgin, when solicited to marry, give a more decent reason for her compliance, than, that she accepted a husband to preserve her female honour pure and unspotted? For though a woman who commits fornication forfeits her honour, she who marries loses nothing of her honour, but rather places it in greater security, by accepting the love and protection of a husband.

4thly, Seeing the Christian law, opposes marriage to all impurities, it is evident that those men greatly err, who have endeavoured to tarnish the honour of marriage, as if it were some way inconsistent with the exalted purity and sanctification of the Christian life.

This error took its rise from religious pride, endeavouring to refine upon the gospel rules of holiness: and here, upon a general view of the history of religion, we may lay it down for a maxim, that wherever we find men zealous to exalt holiness above the plain words of the gospel, and condemning any amusement or enjoyment of life, not condemned by it, there we may be sure to find some of the most important precepts of the gospel greatly neglected, or altogether set aside; thus the gospel informs us, that the Pharisees refined on the precepts of Moses against bodily defilement, making

ing many additional rules that had no foundation in his law, while they neglected the weightier matters of that law; and thus it is well known that the Roman church has, for many ages, made many things unlawful, not condemned by the gospel, while they have been industrious to render of none effect every divine precept. And though the hypocrisy of that church has for some ages been greatly exposed by protestants, yet even among protestant churches, the same spirit of religious pride may be found, in some degree, still working after its old fashion, condemning some things not condemned by the gospel, while it deceitfully undermines, and opposes, the great scope and design of the gospel precepts.

When spiritual pride, in this manner, began to lessen the honour of marriage, under pretence of promoting superior purity and holiness, it is natural to think that the scripture-doctrine of mortification and disconformity to the world, would be corrupted to serve this pride; and particularly that an unfair use would be made of Paul's commendations of a single life, and his preferring it to the married state. Accordingly, church history informs us how the monastic life was introduced, by extravagant commendations of virginity and single life, till the honour of marriage in general was greatly sunk, and marriage forbidden to numerous classes of men altogether, by which means uncleanness reigned through the nations called Christian, attended by the most inhuman cruelty, now found necessary, to conceal its effects.

It is proper therefore to observe, in what respects Paul prefers the single to the married life. And this we shall find he does, not by throwing any reflections on the purity of the conjugal affection, or union, but in respect of the worldly care and anxiety introduced by it; and because, when

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persecution grew violent, married persons were exposed to much greater perplexities and hardships than those in a single state. In general, the great advantage of the single life, in respect of which he counts them happier than the married, lies in this, that being less entangled with worldly cares, they are at greater liberty to exert themselves in the service of Christ, to travel about as the service of the gospel may require, and when persecuted in one city to fly to another. So his words run thus, 1 Cor. vii. 32,—35. “But I would have you without carefulness. He who is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord; but he that is married, careth for the things of the world how he may please his wife. There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy, both in body and in spirit; but she who is married, careth for the things that are of the world, how she may please her husband. And this I speak for your own profit; not that I may cast a snare upon you (or rather a *cord*, referring to the Jewish language about binding and loosing the conscience; as if he said, not to make you suspect it sinful to marry) but for that which is comely, and that you may attend upon the Lord without distraction,” that is, worldly care.

If then, comparing a married with an unmarried professor of the faith, we find the former more attentive to the service of Christ and the gospel, than the latter, we must at the same time, according to Paul’s doctrine, pronounce him more eminent in holiness and purity of life than the other. And if we should see one, otherwise disposed for marriage, determined to chuse a single life through carefulness about the world, or the eager

eager pursuit of gain, and fear of expence—we cannot see the authority of the Lord influencing him at all, but rather a base, sordid passion, wholly belonging to the corruption of nature, overcoming a natural and honourable propensity. As for those, who, under pretence of disconformity to the world, and devoting themselves wholly to Christ, withdrew from the cities where churches were planted, to lead monastic lives in the wilderness, we must consider them rather as departing from the presence of the Lord, and as cowardly deserters from the appointed field for fighting the good fight of faith, which must be maintained with earnest contention before the face of its numerous enemies. The same sort of people who first retired to desert places, were afterwards lodged in the secret chambers, or in cells, cloisters, or monasteries. Against all such hypocritical pretences to nearer connection with Christ, he himself forwarns us, Matth. xxiv. 23,—26. “If any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ, or there, believe it not: If they shall say unto you, Behold he is in the desert, go not forth; behold he is in the secret chambers, believe it not.”

Though Protestants have been taught to exclaim against the hypocrisy of the Roman church in this, as well as other respects, yet we may easily perceive the same spirit cherished among them and their religious leaders, notwithstanding all the restraints Divine Providence in these latter ages has laid them under. And as nothing serves more to propagate irreligion and looseness of manners than hypocrisy easily discovered; so a manifest connection between these effects and their proper source, may very commonly be perceived in the families of devout Protestants. It has been often observed, that the children of the regularly-devout sort of people, are frequently found remarkably

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irreligious, and loose in their conduct. And is it not equally observable, that such of them as take a religious turn, are, generally speaking, no less remarkable for covetousness and self-conceit? How rare a thing is it to find a man of a religious character, bringing up his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord? Is it not far more common, to find such, training up their children in religious pride, and an eager pursuit of worldly gain? And when the children come to be marriageable, which we may reckon the critical period, on which the comfort of their lives as well as their character must in a great measure depend, how few parents are at pains to instruct them in the Christian law about marriage, or to impress their minds with a sense of the fear of God in regard to it? And how many, through covetous or ambitious views, either dissuade their children from marriage, or so discourage their particular choice, as either to break their spirits, or compel them to vicious courses? but whatever other vicious courses they may be compelled to, they are strongly charged against indulging themselves with loose women, this being attended, not only with considerable expence, but also with great risk of public loss of character.

And here it may be observed, that the discipline of many churches, though very remiss in regard to other worldly lusts, is often very inquisitive and sharp-sighted, to detect and censure this species of uncleanness—I mean, betwixt a free man and a free woman, which is distinguished by the name of simple fornication.

On this occasion it may be proper to observe, in what light this practice was considered among the heathens, when the apostles wrote to the first churches, condemning it as an evil by no means to be tolerated among them.

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It appears from the famous speech of Augustus, rebuking the gentlemen batchelors of Rome, whose number he observed, with displeasure, to be very great, that to live in fornication, was considered as a loose and dishonourable way of living, compared with the honourable state of marriage: but though a lifetime spent in this practice, especially when the number of unmarried men was so great as to be a manifest damage to the state, might draw the disesteem, and even the resentment of the public; yet, setting aside this complex view of the matter, it would seem that occasional instances of this practice, were scarcely deemed sufficient to fix a blot upon a man's character, even by those who were ready to shew high resentment against adultery, and against dishonouring a virgin. The practice being common was generally winked at; nor do I find that the heathens had any laws making it criminal in the man, though the universal voice pronounced infamy on the woman.

In consequence of this view of the matter among the heathens, it appears from the decree of the apostles, Acts xv. 29. as well as from their epistles to the churches, that the Gentile converts were averse to admit any conviction of the sinfulness of fornication, even after they had been convinced of their former wickedness in many other respects. So the apostles in that decree (which may be called the charter of the Gentiles freedom from the Jewish law) finding it necessary to charge the Gentiles to abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, charges them, at the same time, to abstain from fornication; adding, "from which if you keep yourselves, you shall do well," as finding in them no other evil practice they were disposed to defend.

Yet long after this decree was delivered to the churches, we find it was a matter of no small anxious

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ous care to the apostle Paul, to enforce upon them the precept against fornication: yea, he finds it necessary, in a particular manner, to refute the reasonings that were advanced in its defence among the members of the Corinthian church; and this he does upon principles of honour, elevating the mind to a tenor of conduct superior to what is enforced merely by common law; principles of honour to which they were entire strangers before they knew Christ: even as we may find a nobleman, animated by a sense of dignity, to shew more honour in his actions, than is to be found with those who aim no higher than to escape the penalties of the laws of their country.

I own indeed, that viewing this matter attentively, even by the light of nature, a good deal may be said against fornication; for it may be said, and I think justly too, that it debases human nature, and sets man too much on a level with the brutes, while he indulges the propensity which he has in common with them, at the rate of throwing aside the principles of love, and honour, which we formerly observed to be likewise natural as well as peculiar to him. And here, various considerations might be pertinently urged, respecting the consequence of this practice; such as, the risk of improper education, infamy, and other disadvantages to the offspring, &c.; but I chuse to confine myself to the practice itself in the simple and primary view of it.

Now, I can easily conceive a nobleman of a lively sense of honour, though a stranger to the gospel, resisting a temptation to commit fornication, by such reasoning as this—"Shall I debase myself to become one flesh with a wench, who, the first opportunity, may admit my footman or my slave to the same intimacy? no; it wounds my honour,—I scorn the thought!" And perhaps

it is chiefly, or only in this point of view, that infidel gentlemen, who yet retain any quick sense of honour, can be led to see any thing dishonourable in fornication.

But this way of reasoning loses much of its force, when we would address ourselves to the lower class of mankind; for though we should insist ever so much on the peculiar dignity of human nature, they are so much accustomed to find their masters, or superiors, paying little or no more regard to them, than they do to their brutes, that this kind of reasoning does not greatly engage their attention: we have indeed the less occasion to wonder at this stupidity in our lower sort of people, when we reflect, that most of our gentlemen of rank and figure, who can at any time declaim fluently upon the dignity of human nature, and are ready to pledge their honour upon every occasion, do yet discover very little honour in their actions, particularly with regard to the matter we are now treating of; so that it is hard to say where their honour lies, except it be in their readiness to resent an affront—when they dare.

But it is the peculiar glory of the gospel, as a supernatural revelation, that it is adapted to beget in the lower class of mankind, the noblest sentiments of honour, and such an exalted sense of the dignity of human nature, as far surpasses the comprehension of the great men of the world.

Now, it is observable that the apostle introduces his argument against fornication, 1 Cor. vi. 11. by reminding the believing Corinthians of the high dignity to which they were advanced by their connection with Christ, and some of them from the basest condition of the greatest defilement: for, giving a list of the more infamous characters that exclude men from the kingdom of God, fornicators, thieves, drunkards, &c.—he immediately

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mediately adds, ver. 11. "And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." And we find the apostles in all their epistles, dealing much in reminding Christians of the high dignity of their calling, when animating them to the spirited exercise of the Christian virtues; even as the guardians of young princes or noblemen, inculcate upon them their exalted birth and high expectations, in order to elevate their minds above every thing that is base and sordid.

The news of a slave being adopted into the family of a great king, to rank with princes of the blood, would carry a high sound in this world; but what a poor idea would it have conveyed to the apostles, compared to the high sense they had of the dignity of those, whom they saw exalted from the basest condition to be in Christ Jesus? See how Paul addresses these same Corinthians in the first chapter of his first epistle, ver. 26, &c. "Ye see your calling brethren—God hath chosen the base things of the world—But of him are ye *in* Christ Jesus." Thus he addresses another church, "To the church of the Thessalonians, *in* God the father, and *in* the Lord Jesus Christ." And see what a bold style he uses concerning many of the faithful of old who were expelled from society, Heb. xi. 38. "They, of whom the world was not worthy, wandered in deserts," &c.

Hence we find him so often animating his brethren in such language as this, "Wherefore holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling—I beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, &c.—Worthy of God who hath called you into his kingdom and glory," &c. And while he considers all the rest of the world as in darkness, and under the

power of Satan, he calls upon them as the sons of God, and children of the light, to live as became such; reminding them that all things that are reformed or blameable, are now made manifest in their proper deformity by the light of the gospel, and therefore that it became them to pursue a more exalted morality, not estimating the difference between good and evil, by the narrow, dark, and corrupted maxims of worldly society, but by the clear and forcible light of the gospel.

Now it would seem that the Corinthian plea was to this effect; in simple fornication, where both parties are free and willing, no injury is done to society in general, nor to our neighbour in particular; so the law that charges us to work no ill to our neighbour is no way broken, nor do we transgress any law of our country; therefore we cannot see why the practice should be deemed unlawful: besides, by this practice, we do nothing against nature, but rather comply with its dictates. Hath not the Author of nature formed the sexes with a mutual propensity, even as he hath formed meats for the belly, and the belly for meats? Why then should not nature be complied with in the one case, as well as in the other? This appeared to have been the force of their plea; and I apprehend that in that plea, they suggested the substance of all the arguments, that have yet been advanced by our infidel reasoners in defence of fornication.

Let us now quote the text itself, where the apostle, after his usual manner of reasoning, first in few words produces the strength of their plea, and then follows it close with his answer, 1 Cor. vi. 12, 13, 14. "*All things are lawful unto me*" "but all things are not expedient: *all things are lawful for me*; but I will not be brought under the power of any. *Meats for the belly, and the*"

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Here, it is plain, that Paul reasons with them on their own maxims, and shews, that even admitting these maxims to be true, they were not sufficient to support the conclusions attempted to be built upon them. Be it so, as if he had said, that all things which may be done without injuring my neighbour are lawful; yet so long as I retain any sense of the dignity of my own nature, I must still judge how far it becomes me to exercise my liberty: for it may often happen that my going to the utmost bounds of my liberty, may prove disgraceful to myself, even though I give no person just cause to complain of an injury; so that though all things, in this view, may be lawful for me, yet all things are not expedient.

Seeing then it becomes me to consider myself as superior to all my natural appetites or propensities, and accordingly to hold them in subjection to myself, or in regular subordination to my capital interest and honour; I will not suffer any one of them to enslave me, or divert me from pursuing the great end of my being; so that though all things be lawful for me, I will not be brought under the power of any.

But still you insist, that what you plead for, is no way dishonourable to our nature, and this you would illustrate by bringing a parallel case, saying, *Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats.*" True; but even this maxim must be taken with some limitation; for the body is not always to be supported by meats received into the belly; but God shall destroy both it and them, and yet raise

up our bodies to subsist in another manner altogether, in a life far superior to the present : and therefore, even our care about the belly, must be subordinate to our expectations, of that more honourable and happy state, to which our bodies are destined. But I say further ; I deny the two cases to be parallel ; and I affirm, that the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.

Hence it appears, that the apostle lays the stress of his argument on that supernatural connection between the Lord, and the bodies as well as spirits of his people, which was founded in his taking part with them in flesh and blood, and which is maintained and enjoyed among them, by his Spirit dwelling with their spirits, in their mortal bodies ; or their partaking with him in that holy Spirit, whereby he is glorified in soul and body, and made exceeding joyful at God's right hand : and the certain consequence of this connection is, the resurrection of their bodies, as the apostle immediately adds, " And God hath both raised up the Lord Jesus, and will also raise up us by his own power."

Accordingly, the immediate tendency or effect of this connection, even in this life, when Christians begin to relish and enjoy it, is to give them an elevation of mind beyond the rest of mankind, who are all in scripture considered as having their minds debased, by the influence of that spirit, which anciently informed the body of the serpent, whose earthly, sensual, and debased temper, as conducting the minds of his offspring is strongly marked in the words of the curse pronounced upon him, Gen. iii. 14. " Upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life." And this elevation of mind leads all who have obtained it, so to live in the

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world, as becomes sons of God, and heirs of a kingdom; even as they hope to reign in their bodies raised from the dead, over the whole restored creation, in partnership with the Son of God. So the apostle upbraids all who name the name of Christ, or profess connection with him, as extremely insensible of that connection, if they are not influenced by that elevation of mind, that fellowship with him in his Spirit, which leads to a more noble way of thinking and acting than takes place among the rest of mankind; even as the guardians of a young prince or nobleman would readily upbraid him, if they saw his actions unworthy of his birth and high expectations.

Agreeably to this, the next words of the apostle (1 Cor. vi. 15,—17.) run thus, "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? Far be it! What! know you not that he who is joined to an harlot is one body? for two (saith he), shall be one flesh; but he who is joined to the Lord, is one spirit." Then he proceeds, bringing all the most forcible motives in view at once, to forbid fornication of every sort, as directly, and at first instance dishonourable to the body; whereas every other lust, however consequentially dishonourable, both to body and spirit, operates, or is intended to operate first, on some object without the body. "Flee fornication," says he, ver. 18,—20. "Every sin that a man doth is without the body, but he who committeth fornication, sinneth against his own body. What, know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you? which ye have of God, and ye are not your own: For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God

"God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

Thus, along with the arguments which he had before advanced, he now urges the high and invaluable price of their redemption, paid by the Son of God, when he laid down his life for them, and this as a powerful motive to engage them to honour in their body and spirit the living and true God, who provided such a ransom for them, and who thereby bought them for his own service, even the same motive that is urged by another apostle (1 Pet. i. 18, 19.) to withdraw his friends in the faith from their former vain conversation when he says, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish, and without spot."

Now, upon a review of the apostle's reasoning though it is evident that he lays the main stress on supernatural argument, yet I am far from thinking that he excludes what was formerly hinted as suggested by nature, in regard to the honour of the human body. Yea, it is far more agreeable to the tenor of his reasoning here, and to the language of his epistles in general, with respect to fornication, to conclude, that in this case, as well as in various others, the superadded light of the gospel, more clearly evinces and enforces what the light of nature suggested; and not only so, but is likewise fitted to rouse the heart from the lethargy into which it is sunk by evil customs, while destitute of the hope of a blessed resurrection, so to clear the eye of the mind to perceive more quickly and distinctly the simple dictates of nature, as the presence of the sun makes the difference of many objects strike the eye at once, that were but

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more faintly discerned while only the moon and stars appeared. For such is the debasement of mankind, when destitute of the gospel, or among whom the gospel has been greatly corrupted, that in regard to "what they know naturally as brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves." Hence we so often find the apostles calling Christians to distinguish themselves from other Gentiles immersed in stupidity and ignorance, Eph. iv. 17, —20. "This I say therefore and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as the other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their minds, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who being past feeling, have given themselves over to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness: but ye have not so learned Christ," &c. And chap. v. 11, —13. "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them; for it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. But all things that are reproved, are made manifest by the light." And 1 Thess. iv. 5. "Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles who know not God," &c.

What has been said, may, perhaps, receive illustration, by exhibiting a case in point.—Eugenio, though but poorly educated, wanted not ambition. When he came to be of age to push his fortune, he projected various schemes to raise himself; all which, by various accidents, proved abortive. He then sought relief to his mind in dissipation; he became a constant tavern-bunter with low and loose company, whose coarse manners, obscene conversation, and dissolute mirth, became familiar and agreeable to him,

as being found, in some sort, necessary to divert the chagrin that preyed upon him in his solitary hours. When he had spent a few years in this course of life, he unexpectedly, by the death of some relations, became heir to the estate and honours of a nobleman. He advanced his claim, and got it sustained. And now the sense of honour, that had been almost quite extinguished, began to kindle afresh in his breast. He lamented the meanness of his education, and, in order to supply the defect made it his business to get acquainted with gentlemen distinguished for good sense and politeness, capable to promote cheerfulness and good humour with decency. To such he studied to render his house and table acceptable and inviting on all occasions. The longer he enjoyed his new company, the more his relish for it increased, the more his sense of honour was refined, and his disgust at his former company and way of life so confirmed, that he now seriously wonders, how any man can be so lost to reflection as to suffer himself to be entangled in such a course. He even wonders what could enchain him to it so long, and is apt to consider all that period as a season of infatuation or madness, or as if he had so long laboured under the delirium of a fever. Though his unexpected change of condition first opened his eyes, and roused the sense of honour in his heart, yet he now clearly sees, that course of life to be, not only unbecoming a man of rank adorned with titles of honour, but disgraceful to the lowest of the human species, or, in two words, not only ignoble, but also unmanly.

It may be proper now to observe, that the Gospel, which condemns all uncleanness, not only proposes marriage as an honourable guard against it, but also consults the comfort of the married state, by enforcing upon Christians, in that state

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the sentiment of love and honour, by which, as observed before, the common propensity in the human species is peculiarly dignified. So says Paul, Col. iii. 19. "Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them:" and Peter, epistle iii. 7. after exhorting the wives, adds, "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered."

As I formerly observed how the scripture enforces conjugal love, it remains, that some notice be now taken of the honour that must attend it; for love cannot long subsist, unless honour go hand-in-hand along with it.

When we observe the gentle and respectful manners, which nature, without reasoning, effectually instils into young people entering into the conjugal relation, when drawn to it by entire love; either as we find the case described to us in books, or as it sometimes appears in common life; a strong presumption arises, that now a solid foundation is laid for lasting happiness. Accordingly, this promising period of human life, so big with flattering hopes, and so fit to soothe the common fable of fallen mankind, who still dream of some earthly paradise, readily engages the attention of all companies, as it constantly employs the pen of many writers. But experience soon steps in, and damps our expectation, by representing to us, as modern style sometimes will have it, that there is a kind of fatality that presides over and frowns upon the life of man, still forbidding his happiness to be complete; often entirely defeating his most prudent and well-weighed schemes, and constantly making enjoyment fall short of expectation. Or, even when no remarkable cross accident inter-

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venes, that there is something in man's nature that forbids him to be quite happy, and seems industrious to create cause of disquiet to him when every thing around him seems to invite him to happiness.

When we look into the scripture, we see the cause of this, for it plainly assures us, that this present life is forfeited by sin, and subjected to the curse and frown of the Deity; and that accordingly every alleviation or suspension of its miseries ought to be thankfully acknowledged, as an evidence of the divine long-suffering and bounty.

But, though the frown of Providence, forbidding complete happiness in this life, is too universally manifest to be called in question, yet it is observable, that what may be called the two first scenes of human life, open with such fair beginnings, and such blooming prospects, as to give some hint how happy this earthly life would have been, had it not been forfeited; even as the unavoidable adversities of life, by deriving, commonly, a great share of the misery that attends them, from the high expectations which we fondly entertain, become a proof of the forfeiture too plain to be denied.

By the two scenes above alluded to, I mean, in the first place, the charming prospect of innocence joined with unaffected gaiety of heart, which strikes us when we behold the smiles and play of a healthy thriving child! And the next scene is what we have mentioned, that of a loving pair obtaining their desired union by marriage. From these two, all the fondest pictures of human happiness are drawn; and by these the prospect is bounded. Even the imagination of the poet can soar no higher, than to some combination and refinement of these. Thus, man resembles the flowers which open in the spring. He blooms

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for a while, displays his highest excellency, and swells his hopes ;—then gradually fades, till he fall into the ground, from whence he sprang. And thus we find the scripture makes a true estimate, when it says, 1 Pet. i. 24, 25. “ All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass.”—“ The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away; but the word of the Lord endureth for ever: and this is the word, which by the gospel is preached unto you.”

Now, though the gospel never inflames our love of this life, by drawing alluring pictures of its enjoyments, nor flatters our pride with delusive hopes, which only serve to embitter disappointment, yet it throws a benevolent eye on the concerns of this mortal life, and breathes such a spirit of humanity and patience, as tends, not only to alleviate the unavoidable calamities of it, but to prevent or heal those miseries, which we create to ourselves by the disorder of our own passions.

With a view to this, in the case before us, the gospel finds it needful, as we have seen by the text already cited, to remind the husband of the reason suggested by nature why he should maintain his affection to his wife, in the way of giving honour to her. The Greek phrase here has a propriety and force, not so obvious in our version. It runs literally thus: “ As unto the weaker vessel, the *female*, or *womanly* giving honour;” taking *womanly*, in the like honourable sense as we use the word *manly*, when we speak of what is peculiarly becoming a man: so plainly intimating, that in every respect wherein the woman is formed weaker than the man, she is furnished with so many female recommendations, rendering her the more worthy of her husband’s love and esteem ;

or, that every branch of her natural weakness, is adorned with such female advantages, as could not well subsist, but in connection with that weakness.

There is, therefore, in the married state, an honour due by the man to the woman, as there is an honour due by the woman to the man; and the duty incumbent upon the Christian husband, in opposition to neglecting, despising, or, (as it is most properly termed) "*being bitter against his wife,*" is to " *dwell with her according to knowledge,*" by loving her, giving honour, and shewing manly tenderness to her, as *the weaker vessel, the womanly*; while the counter-duty of the wife is equally enforced to submit, obey, and give honour to him, as *the man, the head*. The submission commanded on the part of the woman, is *tempered* by the love commanded on the part of the man; and in the sedulous and continued cultivation and tempering of the mutual honour, thus due to each other, lies the happiness of the married pair; living together as heirs of the grace of life.

Now, in connection with the conjugal love and sentiment of honour, enforced by the Christian law, in manner before mentioned, the apostle, in the passage already cited, 1 Cor. chap. vii. adds, ver. 3. and 5. " Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence, and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband; and, in like manner also, the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency."

Here is a plain law, enforcing upon the con-

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science of both the Christian man and woman, the reciprocal duty of marriage: and as the gratification of the natural propensity of the sexes, is, for the wisest purposes, confined by the great Lawgiver within this line, so here is a strong charge to the married pair, against defrauding one another, or neglecting to attend to the mutual claims of that propensity on either side. It is called "defrauding" one another, on account of the power, or right, which the sacred contract of marriage gives to each over the other; and it is to guard against this fraud, and the impurities to which it may lead, that the apostle, though it may be lawful on certain occasions for married persons to abstain from the conjugal enjoyment for a season, charges them to come together again, lest Satan, through the force of their passions, get an advantage against them.

It is evident from this passage, that the husband and the wife have the sole claim, each upon the other; and that in the decent and proper maintenance of these claims, the gratification of the natural propensity is both lawful and honourable, and free from all manner of defilement, both before God and man.

To illustrate what has been said, it may be proper to consider the whole passage already glanced at, in 1 Pet. iii. 1,—7. which runs thus: "Like-
 " wife, ye wives, be in subjection to your own
 " husbands, that if any obey not the word, they
 " also may, without the word, be won by the con-
 " versation of the wives, beholding your chaste
 " conversation coupled with fear. Whose adorn-
 " ing, let it not be that outward, of plaiting the
 " hair, and wearing of gold, or of putting on of
 " apparel; but the hidden man of the heart, in the
 " incorruptible, of a meek and quiet spirit, which
 " is, in the sight of God, of great price. For af-

"ter this manner in old time, the holy women
 "also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves
 "being in subjection to their own husbands : even
 "as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him Lord
 "whose daughters ye are as long as ye do well
 "and are not afraid with any amazement. In
 "like manner, ye husbands, dwell with them as
 "according to knowledge, giving honour unto the
 "wife as unto the weaker vessel, and as being
 "heirs together of the grace of life, that your
 "prayers be not hindered."

How beautifully, how agreeably to the dictates of nature, and with what powerful motives are the peculiar duties incumbent on the married pair towards each other, commended to them in this passage !

The apostle begins with the wife, and strongly enforces her duty, by the hopes of its proving salvation to her husband, if he be an unbeliever ; by the peculiar approbation of the Deity ; and by the amiable example of Sarah.

By what he says, it appears, that the wife is not to hold her claim upon her husband, with an imperious air, or to urge it with any immodest deportment ; for either of these, in any degree, would be unsuitable to her proper feminine character, and so unnatural ; but she is to support her claim by the proper ornaments which adorn her as a woman, the weaker vessel ; and which are connected with that weakness. In other words, she is to study to secure the affection of her husband, by every female or womanly endearment.

And in the first place, she is to be in subjection to her own husband, as Sarah was ; not the subjection of a slave, but in that willing subjection which we yield to our best friend and protector, when we judge our greatest security and highest honour to lie in our submission. It is agreeable to

to this idea, that all the apostolic exhortations run, for wives to submit themselves unto their own husbands, as unto the Lord—to be obedient unto them—and to reverence them; and it is in this view, that their obedience, submission, and reverence are called for, with peculiar propriety, as an imitation of the obedience, subjection and fear, which the *church*, the *spouse*, the *Lamb's wife*, yields to her great *head* and *husband*.

The apostle, in the next place, points out the particular ornaments, by which the wife is both to please the Lord, and to captivate and retain her husband's affection. And these are not to consist of the tinsel ornaments of dress. The harlot, bold and immodest in her deportment, is also gorgeous in her attire; such ornaments, therefore, instead of making the wife resemble the chaste spouse of Christ, would give her more the resemblance of, or be too much like, those worn by that woman, who is the opposite of the Lamb's wife (Rev. xvii. 4.) But in opposition to this, the ornaments of the Christian wife are to be, not the wearing of gold, or other outward ornaments of dress, but the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which, says the apostle, is, in the sight of God, of great price.

However strongly these words inculcate, as they certainly do upon Christian women, the duty of modesty and sobriety in their dress; and however much it ought therefore to be their study, as it must ever be the study of all Christians, to make conscience of sobriety in that matter; yet the apostle does not appear, as some would understand by this passage, to prohibit in all cases the wearing of gold and rich apparel, when suitable to the station of the persons who wear it; nor does he intimate that a maid could forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire; but his great aim

plainly is, that the wife should study to attract her husband's desires, and secure his affections, by ornaments of a far superior nature; the crown of which should be that meek and quiet spirit, so well suited to set off, to the best advantage, those female charms, which are so agreeable to the natural weakness, wherein she is formed inferior to the man; and which, at the same time, serve to render her most amiable and desirable to her husband; and never fail to lead him, if he be manly, as she is womanly, to the most tender regard for her, and to glory in protecting her as his crown.

This is the most endearing, and most honourable way, in which the wife can prefer and retain her claims upon her husband; and this way, so forcibly urged by revelation, is quite agreeable to nature; for hereby she charms him, she attracts his desires, and, with the purest chastity, yields herself, as due, on the most honourable terms, to his solicitations.

Agreeably to this passage, is that 1 Tim. ii. 9. "In like manner also that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broidered hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works. Let the women learn in silence, with all subjection; but I suffer not a woman to teach, or to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived; but the woman, being deceived, was in the transgression. But she shall be saved in (or through) child-bearing, if they continue in faith, and charity, and holiness with sobriety."

The apostle is here inculcating the same meekness and quietness of spirit on the woman, as in the passage last cited; encouraging her to study

such

such a deportment as is becoming her proper sphere of life, by the hope of that eternal salvation, which comes to men, through Emanuel having condescended to become a little child, and to be born of a woman.

To the same purpose we may consider what the apostle says, in the 5th chap. of the same epistle, ver. 14. "I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully." And in his epistle to Titus, chap. ii. ver. 4, and 5. where he exhorts the elder women in this manner: "That they may teach the younger women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sober, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed."

All these passages point out very plainly the way in which women, professing godliness, are to adorn the profession which they make, as well as the way in which they will most naturally attract both the desires and the esteem of their husbands.

The sphere they are to move in, is, indeed, humble: they are forbidden to be assuming in any matter; they are to keep at the greatest distance from a forward behaviour, both at home and in the church; they are not suffered to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but are commanded to learn in silence, with all subjection. There is undoubtedly something humiliating in all this, especially when we include the matter of child-bearing, with all its distressing antecedents and concomitants, and when we consider that the whole course is, in some sort, a punishment for the first transgression, as appears plainly by the apostle's pointing to the particular part which the woman had in that transgression, and by comparing

ing this passage with Gen. iii. 16. where the sentence against the woman runs thus: "Unto the woman, *God* said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children: and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee."—Yet the apostle, for the comfort and encouragement of the woman, in submitting with patience and meekness to the allotment of Divine Providence in this matter, with every humbling circumstance which attends it, adorning her proper sphere of life with shamefacedness and sobriety; with a chaste and blameless conversation; in a word, with all those domestic and female virtues, which at once become her as a Christian, and give her character a peculiar lustre in the eye of her husband—the apostle says, for her comfort and encouragement in all this, "She shall be saved in (or through) child-bearing;" even as in the forecited 1 Pet. iii. 4. the apostle says, "this meek and quiet spirit is in the sight of God of great price."

Thus the apostle exhorts the wife, recommending, as her chief ornament, a meek and quiet spirit, as of great estimation with her Maker, however light she herself may be disposed to make of it. And by the example of Sarah, and all the holy women in old time, he recommends that subjection, which, together with the other amiable virtues, is most becoming the sphere of life allotted to her by Divine Providence; and at the same time, best suited to set off to the greatest advantage all those female accomplishments, with which she is endued by nature, and which constitute both her highest honour, and strongest security for her husband's affections.

Upon the whole, we cannot but remark, as before, the gracious compassion of the Deity, in the

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tender and benevolent eye with which he regards all, but especially the more important concerns of human life, manifested by inseparably connecting the duty and interest of men together—alleviating the inevitable calamities of life, by exalting a patient submission to that which, in a sort is inflicted as a punishment, into a Christian virtue. And in healing or preventing such trouble, as we are ready to create to ourselves through the disorder of our own passions, by affording and inculcating such a line of duty, especially in the conjugal relation, as has the most natural tendency to effect that kindly purpose.

It is now time to look back to the text, 1 Pet. iii. 7. and take notice of the apostle's exhortation to the husband. And we shall find, as it has been already hinted, that, agreeably to the suggestions of nature, the part which he has to act in this matter, is such as is perfectly agreeable to the dictates of nature, such as is manly, or, peculiarly becoming a man, the superior part of the creation.

How agreeable is it to the impression which was evidently made on the mind of Adam, when first he beheld the lovely form of his accomplished bride, conducted into his presence by the hand of God himself! Adam, with admiration beholds her, as he thinks, seeing through the eye of love, an improvement on his own likeness; she appears to him above every thing else in the creation of God, a help meet for him, and immediately the purest love and chastest desires kindle in his bosom, leading him to utter himself, in a manner expressive at once of the ardency and singleness of that affection, which God ordained should subsist between a man and his wife; Gen. ii. 23. "This is bone of my bone, (says he) and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was
" taken

"taken out of man." And in order to establish the connections between him and her, not only as superior to all other relations, but also so entire as that no other relation should share in the peculiar love which constitutes that connection it is immediately added by the Creator himself (*vide* Matth. xix. 5.) "Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh." With what force then does the Lord Jesus, in his doctrine, conclude from that passage, "What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder."

Milton has described the noble sentiments before mentioned, in a most natural and elegant manner in the following lines; where, after indulging the poet's license, in making Adam awake from his dream, wherein he saw the great Creator take the woman from his side, and mould her with his hands; and after representing him in his waking thoughts as anxiously pursuing the lovely object which he had beheld in his imagination—the poet, on her approach, puts these words into her mouth:

—————adorn'd
 With what all earth or heav'n could bestow,
 To make her amiable; on she came
 Led by her heav'nly Maker, though unseen,
 And guided by his voice, nor uninform'd
 Of nuptial sanctity, and marriage rites.
 Grace was in all her steps, heav'n in her eye,
 In ev'ry gesture, dignity and love!
 I, overjoy'd, could not forbear, aloud,
 —————Thou hast fulfill'd
 Thy words, Creator, bounteous and benign!
 Giver of all things fair! but fairest this
 Of all thy gifts! nor envious. I now see
 Bone of my bone, flesh of my flesh, myself
 Before me: Woman is her name; of man

Extracted; for this cause he shall forego
 Father and mother, and to his wife adhere;
 And they shall be one flesh, one heart, one soul.

B. viii. l. 484.

Such, then, were the sentiments of love and honour, which the gracious Creator at first implanted in the human breast, and which, notwithstanding the great corruption of human nature, have still a strong foundation there. And thus the relation of marriage is honoured above all other earthly relations: and these noble sentiments are ordained to be the companions of the mutual propensity between the sexes, with which mankind is endued in common with the rest of the animal creation. Man therefore degrades himself to a level with the beasts, when he indulges this common propensity, unaccompanied with these exalted sentiments of tender affection and honour; or, in other words, when he indulges it out of that line within which the great Creator, for the sake of maintaining that love and honour unviolated, has circumscribed it; for it is the honourable state of marriage alone wherein that noble sentiment can be maintained, promoted, and cultivated, in connection with the gratification of that propensity, and wherein that propensity can be rendered subservient to those great and important purposes; and of consequence, it is that honourable state alone, as before observed, wherein this gratification can be lawful, and so free from defilement and impurity of every kind.

Now the apostle having these exalted purposes in view, exhorts the husband in this manner, 1 Pet. iii. 7. "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel:" and in the passage before cited, Eph. v. 25, and 28. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also
 "loved

"loved the church, and gave himself for it"—
 "So ought men to love their wives as their own
 "bodies; he who loveth his wife loveth himself.
 "for no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but
 "nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord
 "the church."

When the apostle exhorts the husbands to dwell
 with the wives "according to knowledge," it
 brings to remembrance what is said in the passage
 cited, 1 Cor. vii. 3. "Let the husband render
 "unto the wife due benevolence;" and when he
 adds, "giving honour unto her as unto the
 "weaker vessel," he points out that proper, na-
 tural, manly part, which belongs to the husband
 in manner before expressed, and which consists in
 observing the utmost delicacy, both in advancing
 his own claims, and also in supporting those of
 his wife. For the word *honour* is used in other
 passages to denote support and maintenance, and
 may be considered of the like import here, with-
 out excluding any other sense wherein it may
 suggest the idea of manly, tender, and delicate
 deportment.

In this sense, the Lord explains the law, where
 it is said, "*Honour* thy father and mother," where
 he reproves the pharisees for making void the
 commandment by their traditions, which allowed
 them to devote their substance to some pious use
 and then withhold it from their aged parents
 who had a natural and divine claim to be requited
 with an honourable maintenance. See Matth. xxiii.
 1,—9. and compare it with 1 Tim. v. 3, 4.

In the same manner says Paul to Timothy
 1 epistle v. 17. "Let the elders, who rule well, be
 "counted worthy of double *honour*," or support
 fixing this meaning very clearly to the word *hon-*
our, by quoting from the law these words, "Thou
 "shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the
 "corn,"

"corn," "and the labourer is worthy of his reward." See also how the apostle explains this, 1 Cor. ix. 9, 10.

Now, in a similar sense, the wife, though in a strict connection with those female charms which render her amiable in the eyes of her husband, being the weaker vessel, and her female honour, on account of this weakness, being, by God and nature, as well as herself, yielded into the possession of the husband, to be secured and protected by him; every thing conspires to render it his duty, his interest, and his honour, to support and maintain those claims, which his wife has upon him with the utmost delicacy and affection.

I am inclined to illustrate this sentiment by that passage in the Proverbs, where it is said, Prov. xii. 4. "A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband:" and I think I am kept in countenance in doing so, by what the apostle says, 1 Cor. xi. 7. "The woman is the glory of the man." For as the virtue of a woman consists in the simplicity of her affection, surrendering her honour into the possession of her husband, and considering it as locked up there in a sacred repository, binding her to singleness of affection towards him, to be wholly for him, and not for another, so it is his glory, not only to protect and guard that honour, but also to cherish and cultivate the virtue of the wife, by supporting and maintaining all her honourable claims, advancing his own in that gentle, decent, and delicate manner, which indicates his confidence in her, which is inspired by love and honour, and is best suited to win, upon her part, the most decent compliance, wherein she surrenders herself to her husband without sully, yea at the rate of preserving her female honour to the best advantage.

It is said, concerning the virtuous woman,
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Prov. xxxi. where her character is much celebrated, that "The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her," and, "her husband is known in the gates;" *i. e.* he is known with honour on her account. "Her children rise up and call her blessed, her husband and he praiseth her." And the whole book of Solomon's Song is descriptive of the tenderest love, accompanied with the most delicate honour subsisting in the conjugal relation.

This book, or song, together with what is said concerning the virtuous woman in the Proverbs, have, indeed, a meaning infinitely more sublime than what respects any fleeting relation of this life, being written to describe the union between Christ and his church; but then it must be observed, that if the figures are not, in some degree, literally applicable to the conjugal relation, they will fail of being significant as to the grand matter they are meant to describe; and accordingly the apostle improves them in this view in his exhortation to husbands and wives, in the passage, which has been repeatedly cited, Eph. v. 22. to the end.

With respect to the concluding words of the text, "as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered," there is no call to enlarge, as the text was quoted, principally, with a view to treat of the peculiar honour of marriage. I shall, therefore, only just observe, that these words contain a superadded motive to the friends of revelation, similar to the argument which the apostle enforces on the Corinthians against fornication, and every abuse of the natural propensity, drawn from their exalted dignity as belonging to Christ. Christians, in the conjugal relation, are bound to avoid all uncleanness, and also to be helpers of each other's faith, hope, and charity. And in order to this

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they are bound to attend to the decent and honourable maintenance of their mutual claims before mentioned. Thus they appear in a peculiar manner subject to God, in this, as in every thing, purifying their ways, by taking heed to the same according to his word, and living together as heirs of his grace. And thus living in spiritual, as in conjugal love, their prayers "are not hindered," but, uninterrupted by jarring and discord, ascend up in unison to his throne for the gift of that grace, even eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

It may be said, upon the whole, that as these sentiments of love and honour appear in the greatest perfection, when blended with an amiable disposition, so, when we behold an amiable couple united by marriage, their manners suggested by love, independent of any reasoning, exhibit a fine illustration of our subject.

For in the deportment of the woman, we shall find the most entire love to the husband expressed in the most endearing, and, at the same time, in the most modest, discreet, chaste, and gentle manner.

And on the part of the man, that his wife is the desire of his eyes—and that his heart trusts in her. In other words, that he considers her as *his crown*, as will be manifest by the most tender, courteous, indulgent, and, in one word, by the most *manly* deportment towards her, by a deportment answering always in some degree to that of the bridegroom rejoicing over the bride, and those other elevated descriptions given in the prophets with respect to this subject.

To conclude, "Marriage" (according to the words of the apostle) "is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled, but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." And it is in the marriage

riage state alone, that the propensity of the sexes being mingled with the noble sentiments of love and honour, mutually kindling, ruling, and confirming each other, is, or can be indulged, free from impurity of every kind.

In the honourable married state, the chaste desires are gratified; in it the purest joys are indulged; and to crown the whole, those conjugal enjoyments leave no sting behind; no such guilt and corroding thoughts as prey upon the unhappy prostitute; no such debasing reflections as haunt the unclean fornicator, or the equally unclean seducer; and above all, no such cutting reflection as sting the soul of him who has dishonoured his virgin, *i. e.* the cruel whoremonger, or the more vile adulterer.

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